

Letter to the Editor, The Washington Post
By Charles C. Maddox, Inspector General of the District of Columbia
(Edited version published on August 12, 2003)

The August 6 *Washington Post* editorial proffered the erroneous notion that without “the council’s confidence and the Mayor’s political support” I am becoming a “liability” and should vacate my office. The mere suggestion that I should leave for “political” reasons indicates a fundamental misunderstanding of the value of a truly independent inspector general. An IG must exercise his duty to investigate waste, fraud, and abuse and to report the facts as they are found – even if the reports prove embarrassing to elected and non-elected officials at the highest levels. An IG should neither seek nor accept political support.

The editorial points out : (1) that my relationship was strained when I reported that several members of the Council attempted to undermine my investigation of alleged misconduct at the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics and at the Office of Campaign Finance and (2) that our findings in this case “withered under sharp rebuke from the members.” A sharp rebuke from those who interfered with the investigation and are implicated in the report clearly lacks objectivity. Instead, I invite the public to read the report on our website and to make a determination about the gravity of our findings based on the facts.

The editorial rightly suggests that the Mayor should decide whether my “performance warrants removal for cause.” This suggestion is fully warranted because Congress provided that I can be removed *only* for cause. The performance of my agency - not my relationship with the politicians - should decide my fate; and, again, I invite such public scrutiny. My website shows that, under my leadership, we have issued more than 375 reports of investigations, inspections, and audits. Last year, agency heads agreed to more than 85% of the hundreds of recommendations we made for systemic improvement, and we have recouped at least \$17.5 million in real dollars (asset seizures, restitution, fines, recoveries and settlements). Moreover, our investigations, inspection, and audit divisions recently passed the first-ever peer reviews of our performance based on stringent industry and federal standards.

I took the Congress seriously when it stated that it wished to ensure that my Office has “political independence and financial resources to act as a strong watchdog.” (41 CONG REC. H4067) I will never jeopardize the independence of my Office by yielding to political pressure. District residents need and deserve an effective watchdog – not a lapdog.

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